



"The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe"

The Social Pillar should better respect SME needs

Work-Life Balance directive will create high burdens and costs for SMEs

Brussels, 26th April 2017 – In a first reaction to today's publication of the European Pillar of Social Rights Package, UEAPME⁽¹⁾ shows disappointment regarding the way forward proposed by the European Commission. Already in its reply⁽²⁾ to the public consultation, the SME association stated that Europe has the most advanced welfare system and the highest level of social protection, compared to all other parts in the world. The main focus should be on better implementation and enforcement of the existing rules, instead of creating additional rights. UEAPME disagrees with repealing the social partner agreement on parental leave, which is the wrong political signal for social dialogue. UEAPME warns strongly against the additional cost for companies created by the proposed compulsory payment for parental, paternity and care leave, which should equal the compensation received in case of sick leave. Furthermore, UEAPME welcomes the consultation on access to social protection and transferability of rights for different types of work, but recalls its request to the Commission to launch a mapping exercise about the current situation of self-employed in the different national systems. Finally, UEAPME appreciates the commitments to strengthen social dialogue, but it is not enough to build capacity of SME organisation from a bottom-up approach. UEAPME would like to see also a stronger European engagement, including financial support.

Commenting on the European Pillar of Social Rights package, **Secretary General Véronique Willems** stated:

"The proposal on the Work-Life Balance Directive is the first result of one year of discussions about a European Pillar of Social Rights. It immediately puts forward additional social benefits, which will have to be financed by employers directly or indirectly and create a disincentive for our small enterprises to employ more people."

"The Work-Life Balance Directive with additional rights for employees and new obligations for payment for parental, paternity and care leave have to be added to a welfare system which is already the most advanced at global level and which by far provides the highest level of social benefits compared to all our competitors."

Commenting on the consultation on access to social protection, Ms Willems said: *"We welcome this consultation and we expect a true contribution to ease transitions between different statutes on the labour market such as self-employed, employee or unemployed. However, to facilitate such a debate I reiterate my request to the Commission to conduct a mapping exercise on the current self-employed access to and coverage by different social protection systems."*

"We welcome the European Commission's recommendation to strengthen the Social Dialogue at national level. However, we would also like to see a stronger commitment from the Commission to do the same at European level, for example by supporting capacity building for social partners' organisations via the European Social Fund or other financial means."

(1) *the European Employers Association for SMEs*

(2) http://www.ueapme.com/IMG/pdf/UEAPME_position_the_EU_Pillar_of_Social_Rights.pdf

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EDITORS' NOTES: UEAPME is the employers' organisation representing Crafts and SMEs from the EU and accession countries at European level. UEAPME has 64 member organisations covering about 12 million enterprises with 55 million employees. UEAPME is a European Social Partner. For further information please visit <http://www.ueapme.com/> or follow [@UEAPME](https://twitter.com/UEAPME) on Twitter.

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